



What to Expect at the Hospital

Blood Pressure Issues



Feel prepared and empowered if you need to go the hospital during pregnancy or after giving birth. Issues, such as a rise in your blood pressure, need to be looked at by a doctor/nurse. Go to hospital or call 911 as directed by your healthcare team.

What to do when you arrive at the hospital

- **Right Away: Tell the person at the check-in that you are pregnant or if you had a baby in the past 12 weeks.**
- They will check you in and check your vital signs (heart rate, blood pressure, temperature, etc.).
- If it is taking a long time, please ask to speak to a doctor or nurse.
- If you are in the waiting room and your issues get worse (headache, nausea, blurred eyesight, stomach pain, or anything else), tell a staff member right away. See the QR code, “Urgent Maternal Warning Signs.”

Blood pressure checks

During your visit someone will take your blood pressure.

When your blood pressure is taken, if possible:

- Rest your feet on the floor, do not cross legs.
- Do not talk.
- Make sure cuff is at heart-level.
- Make sure the cuff is touching your skin and not over clothes.
- If you know that you normally have low or high blood pressure, or if you take blood pressure medication, tell the nurse.

If your blood pressure is above a certain number, the doctor or nurse may want you to take a medication to lower your blood pressure. Medication could be given either by mouth or using an IV in your arm or hand. Many blood pressure medications are safe for breastfeeding. Talk to the doctor/nurse for more information and with any questions. Blood pressure is normally treated within the hour. If it is not, tell someone that you are still waiting and have high blood pressure. The nurse or doctor will explain what the medications are before they give them to you. Be sure to ask if you do not understand the medications, any potential side effects, and your options for choosing your treatment plan.



**Urgent
Maternal
Warning
Signs**



What else might happen

- Other tests may be needed (e.g. CT, MRI, EKG) depending on other issues or questions that the care team may have.
- You may be admitted to the hospital so you can be watched and helped more closely.
- While you are in the hospital, you may need help with the care of your baby. It is recommended that a support person (i.e. trusted family member, friend, or doula) join you during your visit.
- You may be given other medications as needed. You can always ask questions about your medication, side effects, long-term effects, and possible alternatives.
- Once your blood pressure is controlled, you may be sent home. You may be given a prescription for medication to take at home. Make sure you understand what it is and what it is for.

Discharge and going home

- Follow-up appointment: Make sure you both schedule and go to any follow-up visits with your doctor.
 - Keep a log of your blood pressure and heart rate once you return home. The more information you can bring to your follow-up appointment the more your treatment can be fit to your needs.
- Once you are home, schedule any follow-up appointments that are recommended with your OB/GYN or any other needed doctors (e.g. cardiologist for your heart, neurologist for your brain, etc.).
- Make sure you understand any instructions that you should be following (foods to avoid, activities to avoid, what medications to take, any interactions, or possible side effects)
- Fill out any patient surveys to give feedback to the hospital. Also, you can share this feedback with your provider's office. They may be able to share this information with the hospital.

Possible questions to ask

- What are the benefits, side effects, risks, or long-term effects of this medication or procedure?
- What happens if I do not receive medical treatment?
- Is there an impact on possible future pregnancies?
- Any foods/activities to avoid?
- What is my diagnosis and what are the long-term effects?
- Will medications affect my breastmilk?